

Bridges to the World

newsletter of the Sarasota Sister Cities Association

fall 2011

Adoptable Ideas Flow From Florida Sister Cities Conference

Sarasota Sister Cities Association President Tom Halbert and Events Chair Gayle Maxey represented Sarasota Sister Cities at the Florida Sister Cities Conference, held at the Cocoa Civic Center August 5-6, an event that coincided with NASA's launch of the Juno probe to the Sister Planet of Jupiter.

About 80 delegates, participants, guests, volunteers attended as State Coordinator Cris Boehler kicked off with a welcome reception Friday evening featuring displays from several Sister Cities programs and several tables featuring a bounty of foods from various nations, providing an informal opportunity for delegates to meet and exchange program ideas.

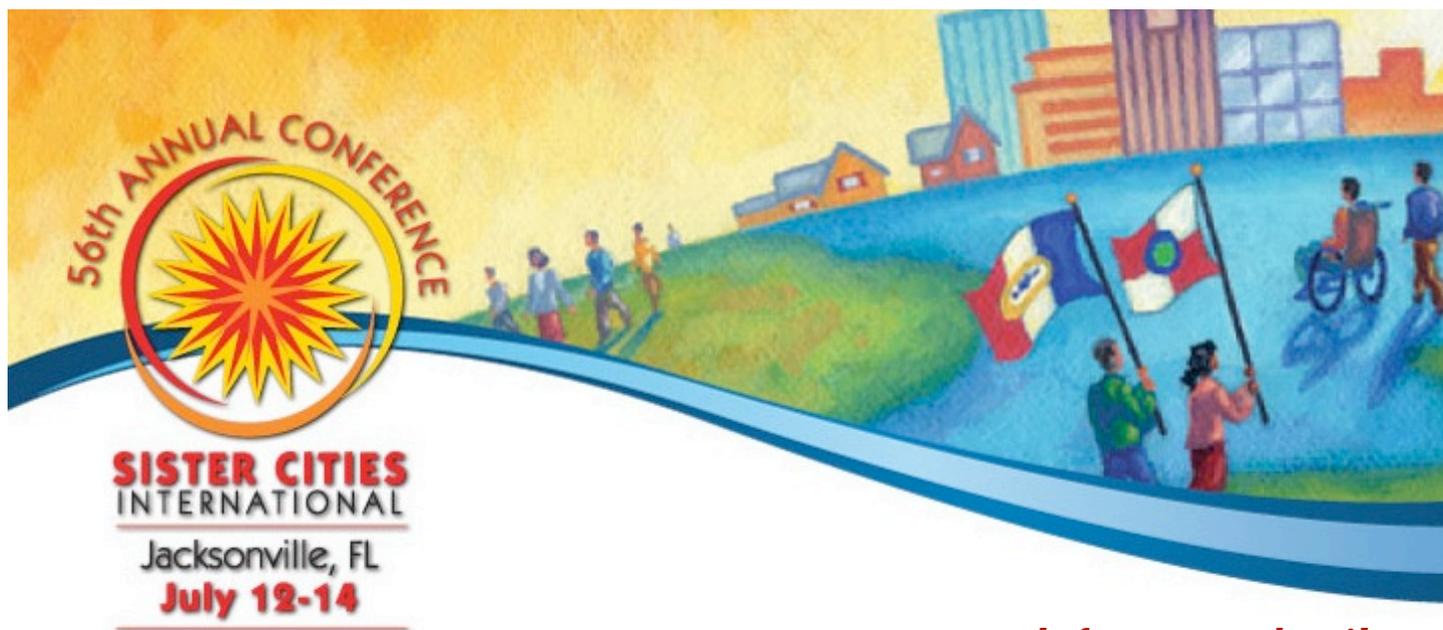
A show-and-tell session kicked off Saturday with presentations from Lakeland, Miami Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, Boynton Beach and Cocoa. Afterwards, three one-hour roundtable discussion periods focused on eight topics — special events; economic develop-

ment; funding; finding members; communications; purpose, mission, by-laws; involving youth and involving city councils.

The luncheon speaker was Cocoa Mayor Michael Blake. Attending with Mayor Blake were all city commissioners and the deputy city manager. Announcement was made of a new Florida Sister Cities website, now offering news and updates at www.floridasistercities.org.

A presentation of the 2012 Sister Cities International Convention that will be hosted by Jacksonville, July 12-14 concluded the conference.

An eight-page report on the conference has been distributed to SSCA board members and is available to any member who would like to be aware of the many ideas that sprang from this event. Contact your local president, Tom Halbert, (johnhalbert@comcast.net) to request a copy of the report.



watch for more details ...

Bridges to the World

Sarasota Sister Cities Association

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Building Bridges of Peace & Understanding Since 1963

Sarasota Sister Cities Association

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Sarasota, Florida 34236
www.sarasotasistercities.org



Mark Your Calendars — Monthly Event Schedule 2011-12

For the coming year, SSCA monthly luncheons will be held the first Friday of each month except December, beginning October 7th, at the Sarasota Yacht Club.

A mix-and-mingle period will start each event at 11:30 a.m.; lunch will begin at noon, followed by a select program. As always, the dates may be modified if unforeseen visitors from one of our Sister City's should dictate a change of date.

Dates for the upcoming luncheons this season are:

October 7, 2011
November 4, 2011
January 6, 2012
February 3, 2012
March 2, 2012
April 6, 2012 – Annual Membership Meeting

Meet & Greets

A monthly meet and greet evening program will also be continued this season on the third Tuesday of each month. Details about the meet and greets will be provided electronically and will also be available on the SSCA web site.



Some familiar faces enjoy a recent SSCA Meet & Greet

Remaining dates are:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| September 20, 2011 | April 17, 2012 |
| October 18, 2011 | May 15, 2012 |
| November 15, 2011 | June 19, 2012 |
| January 17, 2012 | July 17, 2012 |
| February 21, 2012 | August 21, 2012 |
| March 20, 2012 | |

Details about the luncheons as well as meet-and-greets will be sent to members via eMail and posted at our website, www.sarasotasistercities.org.

From the President

This has been a busy period in the traditional off-season for our board and our city directors.

To start, a wide-ranging open discussion of Sarasota Sister Cities direction for the future was held July 16. The three-hour meeting, open to all members of SSCA, focused on the realities of the direction SSCA should take in the new season and beyond. The thrust of the discussions recognized the limitation of inadequate revenues by government agencies everywhere in an age of economic recovery and the capabilities of SSCA in the role of citizen diplomats.

A report of the meeting covers major items discussed, identifies areas where action will be required and identifies the board member/members responsible for specific short- and long-term initiatives. If you would like a copy, contact me by phone or eMail. As chair of the planning meeting I appreciate the time and thoughtfulness contributed by SSCA board members and city directors and others who participated in the effort to create a roadmap for SSCA for this season and those beyond.

Monthly Meet-and-Greets and Luncheons

In both July and August we continued the popular meet-and-greet program with great turnouts, at the new Patrick's downtown in July and at Libby's in the Hillview area in August. This program will continue on the third Tuesday of each month. Watch for the monthly eMail blast to learn about the location for each month's event.

In addition, we will have an active luncheon program at the beautiful Sarasota Yacht Club beginning October 7 and then on the first Friday at each month thereafter (except December). Look for other initiatives, especially with the upcoming commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the twinning with Dunfermline, Scotland, in spring 2012 and our second One World gala in March, our major annual fundraising event.

Working with Vladimir

In late July, we conducted a very productive video conference at city hall with the head of International Affairs for Vladimir, Russia. Vladimir is our second-oldest Sister City and, as the relationship lost its spark in recent years, we had notified Vladimir that the twinning was being placed in *emeritus* status. The notification came at the same time as a change in city administration occurred, with Anna Makarova selected to be in charge of International Affairs.

SSCA City Director Gundula Coleman, Vice City Director Nikolay Safonov and I discussed the possibility of reactivating our Vladimir connection, after which the 50-minute video conference took place. The result is a re-evaluation in both Sarasota and Vladimir. This understanding would not have reached this conclusion without the video conference real time capability. Thanks to Nikolay and Bill Mallet, city webmaster and SSCA city liaison representative, we have accomplished a new understanding that would have required expensive travel or extensive written exchanges.

SSCA at City Hall

Then came a surprise as we had to change our office space in city hall. We had to give up our space in the city auditor and clerk's suite for expansion of the city media office. But it has become a win-win situation for us, thanks for City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini and Bill Mallett. Our new office, while smaller, offers fantastic public access and visibility. For those familiar with city hall, the space was previously used for paying parking fines. on the first floor of city hall, next to the mayor's office and across from the commissioners room and the auditor and clerk's office. We have picture windows for wonderful visibility of our art and memorabilia, just steps away from our display case in the main hallway.

I view all of this as moving on up and a big gain for SSCA recognition.

Tom Halbert

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Bridges to the World

Sarasota Artists' Spring Xiamen Visit Dubbed "Astounding", "Marvelous"

by Carolyn Bloomer, Xiamen City Director

It was an incredible experience!

~ Robert Farber ~

These interactions will transform us to be multi-faceted global citizens with synergized new vision!

~ Javier Rodriguez ~

So say two Sarasota artists upon their return from a two-week visit to our Chinese Sister City, Xiamen.

Robert Farber, professor of fine art at Ringling College of Art and Design, and Javier Rodriguez, a Puerto Rican-American artist, were selected by a panel of local jurors to represent Sarasota as artist ambassadors in "Act II" of an artist exchange that began in 2009 when two artists from Xiamen visited Sarasota for two weeks.

During their May visit, Robert and Javier were hosted by Xiamen and Jimei Universities, where they held a series of lecture demonstrations, exhibited their work, and engaged in stimulating exchanges with Chinese students and colleagues. The intensity, creativity, skill, commitment and level of intellectual inquiry of the Chinese impressed them greatly, and suggested many possibilities for collaborative projects and exhibitions.



Robert and Javier at the Jimei Art Zone with Dean and faculty of Jimei University College of Art

But Robert and Javier's experiences were not only academic. At the Jimei Art Zone, where independent artists have working studios (much like the Chelsea area in New York City), Robert found "the energy and professional quality of the work to be astounding." They explored the grounds of famous Nanputou Buddhist temple and enjoyed a five-course vegetarian meal cooked by the monks which the Sarasotans deemed "marvelous". Their pulse was quickened by a two-hour "hair-raising car ride" through the mountains to visit Fujian's famous "round earthen buildings" (*tulou*), built more than 900 years ago, which now comprise a UNESCO World Heritage site.

They also toured a "painting factory village" where about 6500 technically skilled employees can recreate any work by Western masters (or family photographers) into an "original" oil painting. They visited the home of one painter specializing in copies of Van Gogh, for which the "artist" receives about \$75US each.



Robert Farber demonstrates for students at Xiamen University College of Art

For two weekends, Robert and Javier were home-hosted by the family of a prosperous businessman. The artists were the first foreigners the family had ever entertained in their multi-million-dollar waterfront mansion. The businessman is involved in kayaking franchises and training Olympic athletes as sidelines, and expressed an intense interest in hosting and funding future exchanges.

At the request of their hosts, Javier and Robert prepared American breakfasts of scrambled eggs with onions, ham and cheese, French toast, juice and coffee. They also visited classes at the 12-year-old daughter's Foreign Language Middle School, where they were impressed by the fluency with which many students spoke English.



Javier Rodriguez at the Xiamen Foreign Language Middle School after a student performance

The host family treated their guests to a performance of *La Traviata* performed in Chinese with the Xiamen Philharmonic Orchestra (which, by the way boasts, the first woman conductor in China). "We were amazed at how much the opera still sounded like Italian," the artists agreed.

Watch for ...

In late October, the Art Center Sarasota will host an exhibit of Robert and Javier's new works inspired by their China experience, which will include a slideshow presentation followed by a Chinese potluck supper. SSCA members will be notified as soon as the time and date have been set.

Carolyn Bloomer and Irene Leung, City Director and Vice City Director for the Sarasota-Xiamen relationship, wish to express their deepest gratitude to the members of Sarasota Sister Cities Association, Gulfcoast Chinese American Association, the Sarasota Chapter of the US-China People's Friendship Association, and other community citizens. This exciting cross-cultural exchange was possible only because of their generous donations.

Can You Help? Speakers Bureau Under Construction

Wallace Erickson, our new vice city director for Dumfermline, Scotland, who was introduced in our last edition of *Bridges*, has also stepped forward to begin assembling a Speaker's Bureau for Sarasota Sister Cities Association. The goal is to build a collection of speakers who can go out and spread the word about SSCA to community organizations such as Rotary, Board of Realtors, various international clubs and others. Materials have been assembled for such presentations but may need some updating. Contact Wally at realeadyne@aol.com or call 941/923-1800 for more information.

Report from Mérida

City Director Javier Curiel enjoyed a productive trip to Mérida, Mexico, on this summer to explore a personal opportunity and, while he was there, took the opportunity to connecting with our contacts down there. He met informally with Ana Luisa Ley, Mérida's Sister Cities representative, about what is happening with the Sister Cities relationship between Mérida and Sarasota so far.

Rob and Bea Constable, a couple engaged in teaching music and art and who had purchased a home in Mérida a few years ago, joined Sister Cities when they learned about the signing in December. Ever since, they have traveled back and forth to Mérida and have thus connected with many people in their field. Rob Constable was offered a summer job teaching a class at the University ESAY (Music University). The Constables report having had an enchanting experience in Mérida this summer and look forward to talking with the Sister Cities Association about their experience during the upcoming year.

Michael Patrick Fehily, Spanish professor at USF and a board member of Latino Excellence of Sarasota, is visiting Mérida as the guest of a language instructor at the University in Merida UADY (Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, or Autonomous University of Yucatan) to establish possible exchange opportunities for students at both ends in the near future.

Renewable Energy

Treviso — No province is more “solar”

Treviso is the most solar province of Italy's Veneto region, as illustrated in a SSCA stakeholders report on green innovations in Treviso's 95 communities to the Sarasota Rotary Club of the Keys last December.

The solar power initiative in Treviso has received top ranking of photovoltaic plants among the 7600 systems installed in the region. The information was certified by Mitsubishi Electric, the giant global producer and marketer of electrical and electronic equipment.

The panels operating in the Treviso area produce more than 9 million kilowatt-hours per year of solar energy converted and fed into the grid. The system provides clean energy, the amount equivalent to 6000 tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) not released into the atmosphere.

In the Veneto, there are almost 27,000 active photovoltaic systems, producing 452-million kilowatt-hours per year, saving approximately 22,300 barrels of oil and nearly 20 thousand tons of CO₂.

This is approximately the amount of CO₂ emissions produced by more than 9000 diesel cars for a year or has the same effect as planting a forest of more than 3000 hectares (11.58 acres).

Visit Tel Mond Next Spring with Sister Cities

An official trip to Tel Mond, Israel, and its surroundings is being planned in March 2012 with a focus on local art and artists. This visit is in lieu of an earlier trip that was postponed from fall 2010. The group is limited to 20.

Included will be trips to such locales as Jerusalem, Golan Heights, Kiryat Yam, Haifa, Netanya and Tel Aviv, with an optional side trip to the Ein Hod Artists' Colony or to Eilat, Israel, and Petra, Jordan.

Dates are not finalized and remain open to discussion.

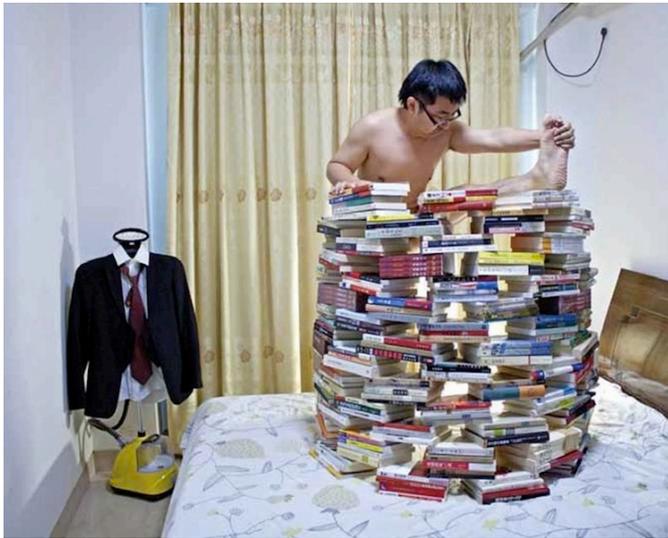
The price for SSCA members is \$2400 per person and \$2600 for non-members; single price supplement is \$800. Cost includes hotels, all breakfasts and some dinners.

Shaike Dranitzky from Mabat Touring Service in Israel will be in Sarasota on September 12th to talk about the tour and answer questions. Mabat is among the best in Israel and has led past Sarasota Sister City delegations.

To learn more, contact Betty Greenspan, city director for Tel Mond, at lotus122@verizon.net or 941/780-1528.

Ringling College of Art and Design Hosts Chinese Art Exhibition

The Selby Gallery at Ringling College of Art and Design is hosting an exhibition through September 17, curated by Professor Qin Jian, a practicing artist and chair of the multimedia department of Xiamen University College of Art, one of the hosts for the Sarasota Sister City artists who traveled to Xiamen last spring. Prof. Qin visited the Ringling College campus August 22-26.



Living Space/Performance Space by JIA Zhixing

“Hanging in the Balance” features the work of 10 young contemporary Chinese artists living in two cultures — China and Europe — as they search for an identity that embraces neither culture directly but focuses instead on individual constructions of personal and social reality. Created with experimental video, photography, and drawing, the often-mysterious images appear to show an extreme departure from traditional Chinese art — and yet a deeper analysis suggests a profound resonance with traditional Chinese metaphysics. All of the artists are graduates of the BFA and MFA programs at Xiamen University, and former students of Professor Qin.

The exhibition catalog was a beautifully designed, fully bilingual English-Chinese production made possible through close working relationships involving Prof. Qin, Dr. Carolyn Bloomer, graphic designer Douglas Higgins, and Sarasota’s Coastal Printing. It included critical essays on the exhibition by Profs. Qin and Bloomer.

Partially funded by the Sarasota Woman’s Exchange, the catalog will receive significant distribution in China as well as a bit of exposure in Europe where some of the artists reside. This catalog will represent the city of Sarasota and Ringling College abroad as a sophisticated player in the rapidly globalizing world.

Note on names: Capitalization of the surname is an international practice to eliminate confusion of surnames with given names. The Chinese order is surname first, but Chinese living abroad frequently adopt the western order, which places the given name first. In this presentation, we respect the name order preferred by the individual artist.



ABOVE Shape of a Soul by YANG Jian

BELOW Tooth Plaque by CAO Shumo



Bridges to the World

Meet Kim Sheintal, Tel Mond's New Vice City Director

For many years before joining Sarasota Sister Cities, Kim Sheintal enjoyed meeting people from Tel Mond, Israel, who came to Sarasota through her membership in the local ORT America organization. Each summer in the 1980s, the group hosted parties — which Kim helped plan — for the Tel Mond students who came each summer to work at a Sarasota day camp.

In 1995, she traveled with her husband Jon and two teenage daughters, Mara and Liana, to Tel Mond for the first time. The family enjoyed the trip so much that when daughter Mara heard that Sister Cities was looking for Sarasota college students to work at the English-speaking summer camp in Tel Mond, she submitted her application. Two years later, Mara was chosen along as one of four college students from Sarasota to go to Tel Mond, representing the city of Sarasota to the Tel Mond community.



Her many connections with Tel Mond ultimately led Kim to join Sister Cities. Since then, she has been an active member: In 2009 she co-chaired the Sarasota Sister Cities photo contest and achieved 100 percent participation from Sarasota's then-seven Sister Cities. Now, she is the new Tel Mond Vice City Director.

In her spare time, Kim enjoys collecting playing cards, genealogy and creating scrapbooks. Her Sarasota Sister Cities scrapbook is full of photos and stories of her involvement us, and she is sure to add many more pages to this book in the years to come.



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